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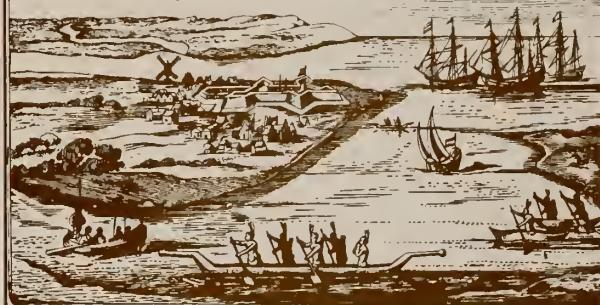
and the

NAVY YARD NEIGHBORHOOD

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Hon. F. H. LaGuardia
Mayor of the City of New York
City Hall
New York City

October 20, 1941

VITAL ARTERIAL GAPS AND
THE NAVY YARD NEIGHBORHOOD

Dear Major:

You recently designated me to represent you in connection with arterial gaps in connection with defense. A report on vital gaps was made to you on November 11, 1940. One of the four gaps to which attention was particularly drawn was in the vicinity of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. We emphasized the urgent need of building the Brooklyn-Queens Connecting Highway around the Navy Yard and of beginning this work as soon as possible. This report proved of value when it was learned that the expansion of the Navy Yard would not only wipe out the Wallabout Market and other existing facilities between the existing Navy Yard and the Naval Hospital, but would also necessitate closing Washington Avenue, the main public thoroughfare along the waterfront.

The Navy Yard neighborhood, of course, has no official boundaries, and may be roughly defined as the area bounded by the Manhattan Bridge on the west, the Navy Yard on the north, Kent Avenue on the east, and Myrtle Avenue and Fort Greene Park on the south. It includes the recently expanded Navy Yard with the separate new housing development for its personnel, the New Fort Greene Houses financed by the State, Fort Greene Park, City Park, St. Edwards Church, Cumberland Street Hospital, a Public Library, Tillary Street and its extension along Park Avenue, and a good deal of run down residential property and factories and plants of various kinds.

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Remodeled Fort Greene Park

Fort Greene Monument and, below, a view across the park looking toward the new housing development.



The Park Department, at your request, prepared a rough plan for Fort Greene Houses which included the expansion of City Park, a vista down the steps from Fort Greene Monument through the new housing development, protection of St. Edwards Church and the Public Library, future expansion of Cumberland Hospital, and provision for the Brooklyn-Queens Connecting Highway along Park Avenue, with additional incidental playground facilities on its border.

The federal authorities paid into court \$4,000,000 to meet awards for city and private property taken within the expanded Navy Yard district. The federal courts will decide on the actual price to be paid which will no doubt be much greater than the sum paid into court. We made arrangements in the meantime to have \$2,500,000 in cash turned over to the city for arterial and other improvements in the neighborhood. All funds from this source will be segregated in a separate fund in the hands of the Comptroller for such arterial improvements to replace municipal facilities wiped out by the Navy Yard expansion. Wallabout Market has already been rebuilt at Foster and Remsen Avenues with other city moneys, and is a self-supporting enterprise.

The complexity of the arterial problem precipitated by the federal taking will be realized when it is stated that the cost of the section of the Brooklyn-Queens Connecting Highway between Manhattan Bridge and Kent Avenue, with service roads, bridges eliminating grades, etc., including additional land which must be acquired by the City on which there are factories and other substantial buildings, and including certain desirable additions suggested by the City Planning Commission, will be over \$6,000,000. An incident in this picture is the building of a new sewer to take the place of the present Wallabout sewer which will cost over \$1,000,000 and must be paid for out of federal funds appropriated for the Navy Yard expansion. It will take approximately fifteen months to complete this section of the Brooklyn-Queens Connecting Highway. The original general plans made by the Triborough Bridge Authority were turned over to the Borough President of Brooklyn, who will employ the same engineering firm to prepare detailed plans and inspect the work under the Borough President's supervision.

The expansion of the Navy Yard including the new Navy Barracks between Park and Flushing Avenues will cost considerably more than \$100,000,000. New parks, park expansion and rehabilitation will amount to at least \$1,000,000. State and Federal housing in the area will total almost \$22,000,000. The work under construction or recently completed in this neighborhood totals more than \$130,000,000.

The maps and illustration in this report will show what is being done in this neighborhood and what is lacking to bring about genuine neighborhood rehabilitation. I believe it is safe to say that what has been accomplished here represents the first case of anything like sound, practical neighborhood replanning in New York City.



A New Playground in Old City Park

Public School, Library and Cumberland Hospital



There are certain significant deductions to be made from this experience. They may be summarized as follows:

1.—The City Housing Authority has failed to realize that its function is not merely to build low rental government subsidized houses, but to bring about general slum clearance and neighborhood rehabilitation.

2.—To a much greater extent than heretofore, moves of the federal authorities to expand defense facilities, public or private, should be anticipated so as to avoid the mess, confusion and delay which inevitably result from unexpected changes in vital city facilities.

3.—The various agencies charged with construction, federal, state and local, should agree in advance on their respective responsibilities and should promptly shoulder these responsibilities. In this case the federal authorities interrupted and in part destroyed vitally necessary city facilities and simply placed upon the City the burden of finding substitutes out of City funds. Similarly, the City Housing Authority tried in every possible way to avoid a genuine neighborhood rehabilitation plan. It refused at first to provide for expansion of City Park and of Cumberland Hospital. It did not wish to take care of the park problem, or the street problem, or the Brooklyn-Queens Connecting Highway, or the proper planning of the area so as to preserve the approach to Fort Greene Monument. It must be said that the State Housing Commissioner took a much broader view of the problem and contributed sounder thinking to its solution.

4.—Efforts are just beginning to be made to attract private or semi-public capital to limited dividend or speculative building in the neglected parts of this neighborhood, which will continue to be sore spots in spite of what has been accomplished and will, in fact, threaten the integrity of the plan.

I urge that the remaining steps necessary to complete this neighborhood rehabilitation be taken promptly, and that some emergency machinery be set up for the purpose which will produce action. I further urge that other run down neighborhoods be rehabilitated in a comprehensive way. The Fort Greene neighborhood should afford the first example, if by no means a perfect one, of something approaching the right way to replan the run down areas of the City, with emphasis not only on subsidized housing but on complete neighborhood clearance with due consideration of every public necessity and convenience and inducements to private enterprise to do its part.

Very truly yours,



Chairman.



Run Down Areas in the Neighborhood of the Navy Yard



Site of Fort Greene Houses

New Housing Developments in the Vicinity of the Navy Yard



Navy Yard Housing Development

Photographs by
Rodney McCay Morgan

Litho by Hinkhouse, Inc., New York



